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SUBJECT: A/S SILVERBERG CONSULTATIONS WITH GVN ON UNSC

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs Kristen Silverberg met with Vietnamese officials in Hanoi November 2 to discuss Vietnam's upcoming role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Silverberg reiterated our invitation for Vietnam to send officials to Washington to consult on its UNSC seat and laid out the key issues she expected the Council to face during Vietnam's tenure, including USG priorities Iran, Darfur, and Burma. She emphasized the importance of approaching UNSC work pragmatically, not ideologically. GVN officials explained their preparations for Vietnam's seat on the Council and their interest in a possible theme of post-conflict reconstruction for their UNSC Presidency. Vietnam has not reached a decision on participating in peacekeeping, which remains a sensitive issue given the country's history and the military's relative lack of experience. Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem said he saw Vietnam's UNSC seat as an opportunity to demonstrate our cooperation, particularly to critics of Vietnam in the U.S. Congress. End summary.

COVERING KEY ISSUES

¶2. (SBU) International Organization Affairs A/S Kristen Silverberg held meetings with Vietnamese counterparts in Hanoi on November 2. Meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh, Silverberg said it was a dynamic time for U.S.-GVN relations, with Commerce Secretary Guttierrez arriving in Hanoi the next week and a possible visit to the United States by Prime Minister Dung in the next year. Vietnam's UNSC term is a good opportunity to cement good U.S.-Vietnam relations, Silverberg said. She explained that although we will not always agree on the council, we want our relations to be transparent and to avoid surprises. A/S Silverberg emphasized that the USG hopes to work pragmatically with Vietnam in a way that avoids ideological divisions.

¶3. (SBU) A/S Silverberg reiterated the State Department's invitation for Vietnam to send a delegation to Washington for consultations on the role of the UNSC before it assumes its seat in January. The delegation could include officials from the GVN's missions in Washington and New York as well as those from Hanoi who might benefit from it. Minh responded that Vietnam wants to have consultations with the United States as well as other P-5 members and others, but there is very little time before Vietnam begins its term. He nonetheless confirmed that Vietnam will consider the invitation.

¶4. (SBU) DFM[f1] Minh handed A/S Silverberg a letter from Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Khiem to Secretary Rice expressing appreciation for USG congratulations on Vietnam's UNSC election. He

said Vietnam's priorities would be counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction and regional issues in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Minh said Vietnam is eager for U.S. input on key UNSC issues. In response, A/S Silverberg said IO could send the MFA papers on these issues in advance of its Washington consultations.

15. (SBU) A/S Silverberg said Iran would continue to be an issue in the UNSC. A/S Silverberg described the P5+1 agreement from September, which commits to action in the UNSC unless IAEA Director General ElBaradei and EU High Representative Solana report positively in November. Minh said that, while Vietnam opposes proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and complies with all UNSC resolutions, it also supports peaceful usage of nuclear power. As a past victim of sanctions, Vietnam has reservations about their use as they can harm the people of the country. Silverberg responded that the U.S. also supports the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and that incentives had been offered by the P5 to Iran to allow peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The USG would welcome Vietnam's input on improving them further.

16. (SBU) On Burma, A/S Silverberg emphasized the need for concrete improvements rather than process only. She said the U.S. would evaluate the success of UN Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari's November trip based on the regime's progress in two areas: 1) opening a direct dialogue with democracy activists and ethnic minority groups, and 2) releasing political prisoners. These benchmarks will determine the USG view on whether further UNSC action is needed. Minh said that ASEAN continues to work with Burma's regime on implementing its road-map, but that because Burma's situation does not threaten the region, the UNSC should not take Chapter VII action.

17. (SBU) Discussing Darfur, A/S Silverberg stressed that the slow pace of the peace process makes it critical to deploy rapidly the hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force to create political space. A/S Silverberg said that the USG would appreciate the GVN's help, as a UNSC member, in pressing the UN to deploy the peacekeeping force as quickly as possible. A/S Silverberg also noted that there is a

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worldwide shortage of peacekeepers and encouraged Vietnam to participate in the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative (GPOI). Minh said Vietnam was seriously considering the idea, but cautioned that because of their history of foreign occupation, Vietnamese oppose sending peacekeepers abroad.

18. (SBU) A/S Silverberg also raised the issues of Kosovo's independence, the Middle East peace process, and Lebanon. On Kosovo, she noted that the U.S. is engaged in the discussion between Serbia and Kosovo, though both sides are reiterating their previous positions. If there is no agreement, Kosovo will likely issue a unilateral declaration of independence, though A/S Silverberg said a UNSC resolution on Kosovar independence resulting in UNSC-supervised independence would be a preferable solution. On the Middle East Peace Progress, A/S Silverberg stressed the importance of keeping rhetoric and provocative language out of the UNSC. On Lebanon, A/S Silverberg credited the UNSC with being a great champion of Lebanese sovereignty. DFM Minh concluded by saying that the GVN would like to use its UNSC membership to advance its relationship with the U.S.

VIETNAM'S PREPARATIONS FOR UNSC

19. (SBU) At a lunch meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Organizations (IO) Department Director Le Hoai Trung and IO officials, A/S Silverberg noted the tight deadlines that UNSC delegations often face. Trung agreed that mechanisms must be in place to deal with these and that Vietnam had conducted a one-year research project led by Deputy Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh looking at UN issues. Vietnam will divide decision making for its UNSC delegation into two main levels[f2]: on the more straightforward issues the Vietnamese PermRep will be empowered to make statements and voting decisions in the Council as he sees fit, while on complicated or unexpected issues he will need to consult with the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister or the Prime

Minister.

¶10. (SBU) Trung said Vietnam has prepared files on the various issues the Council is likely to face during Vietnam's term. He noted that some of his colleagues suggested that the DPRK issue be dropped from the list of active ones, given progress there, but Trung added that, while he is optimistic, he insisted the DPRK file be kept up "just in case."

¶11. (SBU) Vietnam, a pilot country for the One UN program, strongly supports it, Trung said. A/S Silverberg noted the UN frequently disregards the role of the private sector, and Trung agreed that public-private partnerships are vital.

¶12. (SBU) Trung said Vietnam was considering making post-conflict reconstruction the theme of its UNSC presidency. A/S Silverberg said the United States does not necessarily oppose themes but remains skeptical of their utility given that many of the themes distract from the UNSC's main work. Post-conflict reconstruction is an essential issue, Silverberg said, but the UNSC must be cautious about addressing development issues which are normally handled by the General Assembly.

¶13. (SBU) In response to a request from Trung, A/S Silverberg promised to offer the GVN advice on which committees to join during its UNSC term.

¶14. (SBU) In her separate meeting with Bui The Giang, Director General of the Communist Party of Vietnam's External Relations Commission, A/S Silverberg recapped USG priorities on the Security Council, including Iran, Burma, and peacekeeping. Giang said there was a possibility that he would be picked by MFA to join Vietnam's delegation in New York during its term on the Council, but that this was still not confirmed. Silverberg said the U.S. wants a "practical Council" that can address key issues. Giang said Vietnam is already thinking beyond traditional issues to be better prepared to respond. Giang said Vietnam is considering involvement in peacekeeping, but that this was a sensitive subject given Vietnam's long history of wars. On Burma, he said that sanctions or embargoes would be counter-productive and that engagement is a better approach.

FOREIGN MINISTER: UNSC PART OF BROADER COOPERATION

¶15. (SBU) Meeting Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem, A/S Silverberg gave him a formal invitation to consultations in Washington with Department officials on UNSC issues. Silverberg noted that it is clear that Vietnam had done much preparation for its UNSC seat. Khiem said Vietnam was still learning about its role as a UNSC member but would work hard to enable the Council to speak

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with one voice. As an Asian country, Vietnam's priorities will be Asian issues like Burma and the DPRK, Khiem said.

¶16. (SBU) Turning to the broader bilateral relationship, Khiem said Vietnam welcomed the visit of U.S. Commerce Secretary Guttierrez November 4-7 and wants to cooperate in all fields. He acknowledged differences with the U.S. on issues such as human rights and said Vietnam is working to improve in that area. A/S Silverberg recognized Vietnam's progress on issues like religious freedom but said there is more to be done on freedom of assembly and internet freedom. Khiem said Vietnam wants to maintain a frank and open dialogue, and he expressed concern that some members of Congress oppose good relations with Vietnam. Khiem said he hoped that they would see our cooperation on the Security Council.

¶17. (U) This message was cleared with A/S Silverberg.

MICHALAK

[f1]Is his title Vice-Foreign Minister or Assistant FM (per para 2)?

[f2]You only mention two.